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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DPC 227

TRANSCRIPT OF DAILY BRIEFING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1978
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. CARTER: Good afternoon.

A press conference will be held Wednesday, December 6 at 3:30 p.m. by AID Administrator John J. Gilligan and several country delegates on the closure of the 27th Colombo Plan Meeting, concerning assistance to developing countries. The press conference will be held in Room 2118, this room. Contact Gale Wallace at 632-8332 for further information.

I have a statement on the transmittal of the 5th Semiannual Report on Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act.

On behalf of President Carter, Secretary Vance yesterday transmitted the 5th Semiannual Report on Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act to Chairman Dante Fascell of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

These reports are prepared under the provisions of Public Law 94-304, which established the Joint Legislative Executive CSCE Commission in 1976.

The present report covers the period June 1 to December 1, 1978.

As in the past, the record of the last six months has been mixed with progress in some areas, coupled with disturbing setbacks in other fields.

The rate of emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union should exceed 25,000 for the year, the highest number since 1973. Restrictions affecting the practice of religion have been reduced in some countries, and another positive development was the entry into force of the Trade Agreement between the United States and Hungary.

It provides for reciprocal, most-favored nation tariff treatment, and should lead to expanded trade.

At the same time, the report makes clear that the trials of Anatoliy Shcharanskiy, Aleksandre Ginzburg, and other leading human rights activists in the Soviet

Union were "flagrant violations of the spirit of Helsinki."

The report also says that working conditions for journalists have, if anything, worsened in the last six months, and the availability of economic and commercial information in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has generally not improved.

The United States remains committed to developing CSCE as a process which will reduce the barriers between East and West, and solve some of the human problems caused by the division of Europe.

We intend to continue to press for full implementation of the Final Act, both in public and in private diplomatic exchanges.

Copies of the report are available for distribution, I believe, in the press office.

Q Hodding, does the report make any comment on the fact that this year is going to be the highest for Jewish emigration? If not, do you have a comment on that?

A I was reading it rather fast. It does note that the rate of emigration is high.

Q I noted that, but is there a comment on that development as such, as far as US-Soviet relations are concerned. If that is in the report, then never mind.

A Let me refer you to the report first. If it does not speak directly to that, let me come back to that question.

Q Do you have any figures on hand now that you can give us?

A Yes. I can give this. In 1973, it was 33,500 emigrants; 1974, 20,000; 1975, 13,000; 1976, 14,000; 1977, 16,700; and, as the report says, at the current rate, they expect over 25,000 this year. Of course, obviously, the year is not up, and that is a projection.

Q Are these just Jewish emigrants?

A That is what this refers to, specifically.

Q Does it tell where their destination is, or presumably is? To Israel or -- ?

A Most of the emigrants settle in either Israel or the United States. The figures are approximate for the numbers of those who arrive in Vienna. Now, the breakdown -- at any rate, in the Q & A that I have, it doesn't separate the numbers. It may be that in the report, which, quite frankly, this morning I have not had a chance to read yet, it will break down to something.

I would refer you, in this case, to page 23 of the report on this particular issue.

I don't have any other statements. Let me say to you that George Sherman will be briefing at one o'clock.

Q Hodding, Mena, out of Cairo, announced Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, is going to visit --

Q Louder.

Q Question.

Q Speak up, speak up.

Q Do we have to wait until one o'clock before we get that announcement from the State Department officially?

A Yes. Let me say any announcements on anything such as that which Mena has announced usually require some kind of confirmation from places as to the transmittal and acceptance of messages.

Q Hodding, will you apologize to us tomorrow, then?

A No, I won't apologize at all. I was absolutely accurate at the time that I spoke. I was absolutely accurate as of four yesterday afternoon. I would have been accurate if somebody had asked me at six.

Q You didn't qualify it yesterday.

A I did not qualify it because it was unqualified at the source.

Q What has changed, in the meanwhile?

A I am not going to be able to go into that, but George will.

Q Are you saying you will have a response to the Begin message? Is that what you are saying?

A No.

Q What are you talking about? We couldn't hear the question.

A The question is basically on flat assertions which are overturned in less than 24 hours.

Q Which flat assertion was it?

A Mine. No, no, no, as I recall.

Q If you don't want to talk about the Middle East, can we talk about Iran? What word do you have from the Embassy there? Do you have any current reports on oil exports and production?

A No. I don't have anything beyond the press reports that I can contribute on that.

Q Hodding, back on the Middle East. Do you have any comment on the Israeli army's destruction of two houses of Palestinian suspects on the West Bank?

A No. I have seen that press report, and we are looking into the circumstances. At this point, I have nothing more to say.

Q Hodding, to follow up on that, about two weeks ago, you said you were looking into some reports that there had been a number of arrests of Palestinians who were opposing the Camp David accords. Has your investigative team come up with anything on that?

A You mean, has our embassy and consulate looked into it? The answer is yes, we have.

Q Have you got any response or comment?

A I don't have any response to offer you this morning. Do you want me to take a question on that?

Q Sure.

A Yes.

Q A question on Guyana, please, Hodding.

There is a Times report today saying that papers of Jones suggest a much closer relationship with the U.S. Embassy than has been officially acknowledged. Can you take that one, please?

A Yes. I would like to point out, first, that the story is based on memoranda written by Peoples Temple representatives in Georgetown to Mr. Jones in Jonestown. From the evidence we have available now, it appears clear that these people had considerable personal stake in pleasing Mr. Jones. That suggests to us that the memos were based upon selective, incomplete versions of normal and totally justified business conversations between Mr. McCoy and Peoples Temple representatives in Georgetown.

Do you have some specifics you want to ask me about?

Q What else have you got?

A Let me go a little further, because I don't need to be drawn out on this one. We feel fairly strongly about it.

The story raises issues which have obviously been of concern to us, to the Department. The Department has carefully investigated the personal conduct and professional performance of Mr. McCoy, and our investigation will go forward as we continue with our review of the entire Jonestown tragedy.

But our investigations to date lead us to the conviction that Mr. McCoy performed his duties as our Chief Consular Officer in Georgetown in a manner completely consonant with the highest standards of professional competence and ethical behavior.

I will have this available for you, but I will repeat it.

Our investigations to date lead us to the conviction that Mr. McCoy performed in a manner completely consonant with the highest standards of professional competence and ethical behavior.

The role of consular officials is necessarily proscribed by U.S. law, Department regulations, and the Constitutional guarantees of the rights of American citizens residing abroad.

We are convinced that Mr. McCoy did everything possible within these limitations.

Insofar as the propriety of the relationship between Mr. McCoy and the Peoples Temple is concerned, given the circumstances of a large American community isolated and apart from our Embassy in Georgetown, it was necessary for Mr. McCoy to maintain a working relationship with the Peoples Temple representatives in Georgetown.

It in fact became increasingly difficult to maintain such a relationship because of Mr. McCoy's own suspicions of the Peoples Temple, and because of their increasing hostility toward Mr. McCoy.

This was partially because Mr. McCoy had frequent contacts with Guyanese police officials concerning the Peoples Temple. The Peoples Temple leaders were apparently aware of these contacts.

Insofar as some specific allegations are concerned, for instance, did he undertake to agree to find out who was spreading rumors in the Embassy that Mr. Jones was an atheist, in fact, that is incorrect. The conversation reported in the Peoples Temple memo apparently refers to a conversation in which Mr. McCoy himself was accused of being the source of such rumors.

Insofar as the Stoen case, the custody case, was concerned, what the Embassy said in that respect, and it has been repeated by higher officials, the Embassy is involved in providing consular services to American citizens in the litigation which came before the Guyanese courts.

However, it was and is the Department's position that the Embassy cannot take a position favoring one side or another in a case in which all the disputants are American citizens.

Insofar as the allegation that in fact Mr. McCoy informed Jonestown of a list of all of the people he wished to see when he made visits there, that is untrue. It was a reasonable procedure which he followed to let the officials there know of a number of the people he wanted to see.

At no time was a complete list given.

The names of certain people in especially problematic cases, that is, ones in which there were particular problems raised by accusations of some kind of duress, were deliberately withheld prior to Mr. McCoy's first two visits to Jonestown.

In the case of his final visit, only those names of people wishing to report a birth were furnished to Jonestown. Four other names were withheld. I think that is what I have on that.

Q Hodding, can you take a question which I don't believe has been answered, although posed here last week. When the Guyana court in effect dropped the Stoen custody case, was the American Embassy informed of the death threats made against the Guyana judge? And did the Embassy report that to the State Department?

A I think the judge said publicly at the time that the conduct of not the lawyers, but some of the participants in the trial, had led him to the decision to drop the case.

Q The judge has said since publicly that he was threatened with assassination, he and his family, by members of the Jonestown community.

A I am aware of that, too. I am saying at the time, I thought you asked me --

Q And the lawyer for Mrs. Stoen has also alleged that at the time the Embassy was aware of the threat of mass suicide, is that true or not?

A I don't know if I can answer that. No, I can't answer it. Let me take the question.

Q In any event, the Embassy did not report to the State Department that there was any death threat against the judge.

A That one I will have to take. I will take that question.

Q Hodding, can you explain why it has taken you people so long to comment on this? I understand that when the AP first came up with this story that you were informed of it and asked to comment on it yesterday, and as recently as 11:00 this morning, a senior deputy of

yours indicated that you had no answer and, quote, were just going to have to take the heat, unquote, on this one.

A No. I wish deputies wouldn't comment -- no, that is being facetious.

The real question was whether or not at this point, what was being requested as I understood it, was providing Mr. McCoy. That decision has not been taken.

Q Well, you had an opportunity to comment on the story, the Department did, and it has taken you -- you know, after the story has been run in the newspapers, you finally get around to it.

I am just curious why you people are so slow to come up with this kind of a thing.

A I will go ON BACKGROUND. There is always a question in charges involving individuals, whether in fact you attempt to deal with it generally and not specifically, on the grounds that you may be providing a precedent in which every time either a nut, a legitimate newsman or anybody else raises accusations against an individual who is pursuing his duty as he understands it best, you will promptly make that person available to answer those charges. That is always a debate that goes on each time that specific accusations are made by Congressmen or journalists or pamphleteers, or anybody else, whether or not you are going to expose them and thereby set the precedent that any fool can get a person hauled before a public inquiry on the basis of some kind of charge. Each time you have to work your way through it.

And, still talking ON BACKGROUND, this is one that is being worked through the process of trying to make that decision.

Q Hodding, that is certainly a reasonable position, but it is not as if this thing came up out of the blue yesterday. You have known for quite a while that there is a controversial point here about the way the consular matters were handled down there.

A We felt we were answering the general questions as they came in regard to how he conducted -- or how we conducted our consular business down there in regards to Jonestown.

Clearly you then were given a new element, and there have been other new elements that have come in, and we have had to deal with them. END BACKGROUND.

Q Hodding, I am not familiar with all of the literature of this debate, but is this the first time that you have said from here that anybody in the Embassy had real concerns about the Peoples Temple?

A No. I think we have indicated, I thought, rather often that there were concerns, and because we had concerns, we followed through on the trips to Jonestown to ask the specific questions that were raised.

Q I had the impression that from these trips the Embassy had the impression that things were going along pretty well.

A I think that the Embassy had to report what it found, and the Consular Officer would report that he did not have any verification offered to him by anybody who was there, including those he had not notified that he was coming, and that insofar as the operation of the farm itself was concerned, it was what it purported to be. That is what he did find.

Q Can you give me an update on identifying the dead people, identifying them with the passport?

A Jeff, do you have a figure on that?

MR. DIETERICH: I don't have a recent figure. Dover has been putting out figures on a number of people that they have identified on a daily basis.

MR. CARTER: Did you want to try Dover?

Q What is the process you go through with the passports, specifically the passports, if that is all you have?

A Of course you have to go through other processes, as well as finding other phsyical identification which may be in some file somewhere, either on the coast or in other places where some identifications might be kept.

You recognize the state of many of the bodies, but they are more than just trying to match up people to passports.

Q Is the state of it all to the point where we are going to have to give up identifying?

A I don't know, and I think you are just going to have to ask the unit that is doing that. That is out of our hands, right now.

Q Hodding, as a matter of procedure, would Mr. McCoy be available to appear before a Congressional committee?

Q Can't hear.

A The question is: Would Mr. McCoy be made available to appear before a Congressional committee? I do not know.

Q You indicated that the investigation of Mr. McCoy's conduct is continuing.

A I indicated that our investigation of all the events surrounding the Jonestown thing continues, and Mr. McCoy himself would be quite happy to see each and every avenue explored, and in fact obviously they will be. But I think last Friday Tom spoke to the question of how far we were along on that.

Q Hodding, was there ever an answer to the question here as to why the State Department did not refer to Justice a request from Congressman Ryan to explore the grounds for extradition of Jones following an order from the Superior Court of California?

A It was our understanding from Justice -- wait, I think that was answered and posted, because when I came back I remember reading it.

Q It was posted.

A I understand from talking with Justice that in fact they said there was no legal grounds under which that could proceed, and there was hardly any point in attempting it, since there was no legal basis for it.

Q What did McCoy tell the Guyana police? You said that McCoy had problems with the Peoples Temple because he was a source --

A He had conversations.

Q What did he tell them? What was he upset about?

A Let me take the question, again, because I don't remember. I don't want to try to wing that one. I am taking your question.

Q Hodding, a couple more on Guyana, please. Can you tell us anything about the disposition of Jones' body?

A I think for the body questions now, and that sort of thing, I am going to have to refer you elsewhere as a source.

Q To where?

A I would either try Justice or I would try Dover.

Q They say to go to State.

A You mean, you are getting a circular response here.

Q Yes.

A Frankly, our responsibilities in this matter end at the water's edge, coming back rather than going out, and I don't think that I have any information on that.

Q Let me ask you one or two others here, please. Do you have anything on the report about Jones having stashed away at least $10 million in different banks around the world?

A Let me say that obviously we have seen those reports in the paper. I do not have any independent verification of it. That is clearly a matter for the on-going investigation of the entire matter which is to begin. It is not a State Department function.

Q And this last one, if I could ask it, please, about the report that sealed arrest warrants had been issued to people by the FBI believed responsible for the killing of Ryan?

A No, I would not have any comment on that.

Q Hodding, could you amplify an answer posted last week? You said that Mr. McCoy gave lists of people intending to visit at Jonestown, the Peoples Templ.. Why was that done?

A As became pretty clear right often, the people at Jonestown had said repeatedly that they, of course, had a right to turn away anybody that they wanted to turn away. It was to try to facilitate visits by people who were going there that they were informed that they were coming. Otherwise, the normal reaction in any kind of community, and frankly at my front door, is that you don't give me advance notice and you come with intent I don't know, I don't let you in.

[MORE]

Q Was he giving people lists because he feared that a visit of some group or other to Jonestown might trigger a mass suicide?

A I sincerely doubt that.

Q Could you just take that question, to see whether he feared that?

A Yes. You mean, what was in his mind.

Q That an attempt to take the Stoen child back, for example, might trigger a mass suicide.

A Again, I doubt it; but yes, I will see whether he wants to reveal what was in his mind at the time.

Q Hodding, a statement last Friday by Tom Reston said that there are few groups of Americans overseas to whom so much attention was paid by the Government over the last 18 months. Does that include looking into the role of the Peoples Temple in the domestic politics of Guyana?

A I doubt it.

Q Could you take the question, whether that was ever raised?

A The question is being raised, Jeff -- and in some of these running briefings it may have been handled -- did we in fact look into the question of the political role of the Peoples Temple in the internal affairs of Guyana. I remember a general thesis was that that frankly was a question which would be of concern to the Guyanese Government, but that we in fact do not supervise American citizens insofar as their political activity abroad is concerned.

Q One of the first stories said that the Peoples Temple members had campaigned, apparently, for --

A I did go through a routine with that, or John Bushnell went through one on that. And what I said then is generally what the answer was.

MR. DIETERICH: The response to Juan's question about the statement devoting more attention to this group than to other groups referred to it in the consular sense, in terms of the use of consular services.

MR. CARTER: But in any case, your question remains. And I think the answer is no.

Q Hodding, on another line, wouldn't the Embassy be reporting on unusual political developments within Guyana from the standpoint of --

A Yes.

Q Wouldn't this be a legitimate function to be reporting on?

A If it seems to be arising to that occasion, I would say so.

But before we build a framework for an entire story here: You are talking about allegations of political involvements which have trickled out at some length but did not have any particular coverage in the press of its own nation, in which there is an opposition press.

Q If I may pursue this, can you tell us then whether or not, can you say that there was no reporting of a non-consular but a political nature from the Embassy in Guyana relating to relations between the Peoples Temple and members of the Guyanese Government?

A I'll take the question. I have no idea.

Q Hodding, do you know whether there has been any kind of a routine, instructions that have gone out to American embassies in countries where other cults are located, in terms of stepping up the reporting on these organizations? Is any effort being made by the State Department as a result of this to --

A I would imagine that, in the absence of any protests, inquiries, or the like, the answer would be no; that is, that a general, overall blanket decision to start looking into religious --

Now let's use the word correctly. One man's cult is another man's main-stream religious belief. And therefore -- are we sending out an order to our embassies to start looking into religious organizations abroad in which Americans are participating? -- I think the answer is no.

Are we looking into allegations that are raised about places? The answer is yes; that is, we will try to do investigatory on the well-being of American citizens there.

I heard someone say "filing break." I hope you won't, for several reasons: (1) because we've been on only one subject and there may be some other things you want to be on, and (2) because some of you have to file because George is coming on here.

Q Did the State Department take any action to try to draft a psychological profile of the Peoples Temple settlement?

A After the fact?

Q No, before the fact.

A Psychological profile? Did we try to do a psychological profile? No.

Q We had a question yesterday about some charges made by Congressman Wilson of Texas against the Human Rights office regarding Nicaragua. I wonder if you have a response on it today.

A Yes, I do.

The Congressman had several things to say about the policy of what he termed the State Department or the Human Rights Bureau. The answer is: The Congressman's charges, if accurately reported, are wrong in their assumptions and irresponsible in their phraseology. In particular, we reject the characterization of the officers in our Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, in whom the Department has the fullest confidence.

Beyond that, our policy with respect to Nicaragua is the responsibility of the highest levels of the Department and of the U.S. Government. It is a policy with the overriding goal of a peaceful, democratic resolution of Nicaragua's severe internal crisis. As part of a three-nation mediation team operating pursuant to an OAS initiative, we have been working persistently over the last two months to achieve that goal. Our efforts in this regard are not helped, nor is public understanding of the situation improved, by statements and charges such as those made by Congressman Wilson.

That's the end of the statement.

Q Do you have anything on Iran?

A I thought I just went through that one.

Q Did you? I'm sorry.

A Are there any questions arising from stories in this morning's newpaper on Asian affairs?

Q Oh, yeh. I know; I know. (Laughter)

Q How about the French-Chinese nuclear deal?

A Oh. I shouldn't have raised that one. (Laughter)

We have nothing specific on this subject. This is a matter primarily between the French and the PRC Government, and as such I suggest your questions be directed to them.

Insofar as the general question of U.S. approval is concerned, U.S. approval of transfer to a third country of a reactor manufactured abroad with U.S.-licensed technology would require a determination that the transfer not be inimical to United States interests. Discussions on this subject are continuing between the United States and France. No final decision has been made.

ON BACKGROUND -- Question: How, Hodding, can you say ~~that~~ if we have stories running in the newspaper saying that an agreement has been signed?

ON BACKGROUND -- Answer: The agreement is a general framework under which specific particular sales agreements must still be negotiated and signed; and therefore the question, as I have said, on this particular subject has not been subject to a final decision by us. END BACKGROUND

Q Were we consulted before the sale went through?

A The sale has not gone through. Do you mean before the agreement was signed?

Q Yes.

A I would say ON BACKGROUND we have had discussions with the French Government about this. END BACKGROUND

Q What specifically is involved?

A Again, I have to say that in this case the nuclear reactor -- it's been suggested that one of the things that's up for grabs here is nuclear-powered reactors which are manufactured under license from Westinghouse. In that case, the business that I just outlined as to the requirement for our approval comes into play.

Q Hodding, don't the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation law regarding the requirement that recipients of U.S. nuclear technology sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and accept international nuclear inspection come into play on a question of a sale like that?

A There are aspects that come into play. I do not feel, frankly, technologically or in this case legally qualified enough to answer that question directly.

Q Can you take the question, then, as to whether or not the Department believes that to become a recipient of U.S. nuclear techology, whether directly or indirectly, a nation -- whether it be China or anybody else -- has to sign the NPT and accept the international inspections?

A I'll take the question. I'm not sure whether the application is going to be such as you suggest. We'll just have to see.

Q Well, I just --

A Yes, I know. I mean, I take it with that caveat -- that since I don't know enough about that particular subject to know whether the question is phrased the way -- but I'll try.

Q Which specific agency would have to give the approval for this transfer?

A We have to transmit it, but who all comes into play on it in the Federal bureaucracy I do not know. I'll take that.

Q Do you know if China accepts the International Atomic Energy Agency standards for safety?

A This is clearly a question for which I should have brought an expert down here.

It's a different question. He's asking me about a different agency and a different set of requirements.

I don't know the answer. I'm taking it.

Q Hodding, now that you're taking that question, could you take also the question of whether to approve the export license the President in this case would have to waive the requirements of the law?

A I think what I might try to do on this subject, because it will arise in other areas as well, is to see whether I can bring somebody down here tomorrow who can discuss the whole question of what is involved in this kind of transfer. I think it would be better, rather than doing it piece-by-piece.

Q Hodding, in connection with the refugees from Viet-Nam. Does the United States have anything to say about the Malaysian treatment of the refugees? And do we have any more plans to help out in humanitarian ways?

A I think that we have indicated in our consultations with Congress, and in the announcements made thereafter, what our own intentions are in terms of dealing with the refugees. We have, of course, consulted with the Government of Malaysia. Beyond that, I'm not going to go into the substance of it. I don't have any comment specifically.

Q Well, could I switch you to the war, then? Do you have anything to say about the heating up of hostilities between Viet-Nam and Cambodia?

A In reference to that, I have to repeat something which is either a truism or a cliche, which is that our information from the area is sketchy but there is indication that the level of hostilities has increased; and while we have seen those indications, I am not in a position to confirm the reports, particularly in the frame you just gave me, which is I believe of a massive heating up.

Q What about the questions put to you yesterday about the formation of this new Cambodian front sponsored by Hanoi?

A We still have learned little beyond those radio reports and what we have seen reported there.

Q There was a story about linkage between Viet-Nam and China, as far as progress of U.S.-Vietnamese normalization. Is that linked?

A You want to talk about Vietnamese normalization?

Q Yes.

A All right. Find me my Vietnamese normalization expert.

Q While you are looking, do you have anything new on the study of Congressman Findley's reported message from Mr. Arafat on --

A Nothing new on that.

Q Can you return back to the Helsinki Accords?

A Yes.

Q In the Helsinki Agreement, as I remember, there is a specific provision suggesting that all the parties of this Accord should sign and ratify the international agreements on human rights -- such as the United Nations covenants on human rights and the United Nations conventions against genocide and those forms of racial discrimination.

So the question is: I don't know how many of these international agreements the United States has already signed and ratified. If you can give --

A I will be glad to give you that, because I don't have it on the top of my head. The answer is: we have not signed several.

Q Could you take this question for me?

A I will give you the specific answer as to what we haven't signed -- which we have undertaken to do and which the President has also undertaken to do beyond the agreement. And I will be glad to post an answer on that -- that is, as to which ones and what plans we have.

Now when I say signed, I mean also had implemented, which is I think, the question.

Q On Namibia, does the Department have any clearer understanding of what South Africa wants to do with the results of the elections?

A I do not have at this time, any kind of guidance on whether or not there has been a report back since the Foreign Minister went home.

I do not have any further indication to answer on your question on that.

Come on up, Jack and have fun.

MR. CANNON: I am Jack Cannon, the Public Affairs Officer for the East Asian Bureau.

I'm sorry, what was the question that was taken?

Q On whether progress on relations with Viet-Nam is linked to U.S.-Chinese --

MR. CANNON: Well, in relation to our Viet-Nam policy, the policy of normalization of relations with Viet-Nam is unchanged. We have had discussions on this matter with the SRV since May of 1977, and we expect these conversations to continue.

We are, however, seriously concerned over the growing conflict between Viet-Nam and Cambodia and the swelling numbers of refugees coming out of Indochina.

We are, as well, studying aspects of the Soviet-Vietnamese Peace and Friendship Treaty.

President Carter has set no timetable or deadline on normalization of U.S.-Vietnamese relations; and while it remains a goal of our policy, we are taking into account the important matters I have just mentioned as we discuss how and when to proceed with the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Q Jack, are you suggesting that the fighting between Viet-Nam and Cambodia could delay normalization of relations?

MR. CANNON: I want to restress that we have set no preconditions, Lars, as to normalization. But the pace of normalization -- we are studying these other important matters, one of which, was as I just stated, the Vietnamese-Cambodian growing conflict.

Q But one could look at that in two ways: You might be happier if they overthrow the Pol Pot regime.

MR. CANNON: Well, I am not going to characterize or suggest how you want to look at it or speculate on what will develop with the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict. But it is a serious matter. We are seriously concerned over it, and we are taking it into account in our discussions and thoughts over the timing and pace of normalization of relations.

Q But on that matter, why is it serious? In other words, does the U.S. feel that one party is particularly responsible for that conflict?

MR. CANNON: Bernie, I am just not going to get into a speculation as to the who-shot-John-in-the war or the growing conflict. I am just saying that we consider the whole problem seriously enough to take it into account when we consider our discussions with the Vietnamese over normalization.

Q Does that mean that if this conflict gets to a certain point, it will become an impediment to normalization of relations?

MR. CANNON: No, that is speculative. I am not going to go down that road. I am just stating to you what our policy is now.

Q Is it an impediment now?

MR. CANNON: No, we are not talking about impediments. I am saying we are taking these factors into account. Period.

Q Is Chinese support for Cambodia a factor that we take into account in the quesiton of normalization with China?

MR. CANNON: No, I am not going to get into a discussion about our concerns with either the Chinese or the Soviets over this matter. Specifically on Viet-Nam, all I am saying is that it is entirely an important issue and we are taking it into consideration.

Q What effect does a statement such as the one you have just made have?

MR. CANNON: That is a conclusion for you to draw, I think.

Q Is the United States making any overtures, say to Hanoi, through its contacts to see what can be done to de-escalate the conflict?

MR. CANNON: Well, look. I think it should be clear that what we have said is that there are no new preconditions; that when we entered in May of 1977 into discussions with the Vietnamese over normalization, we set no timetable, we set no deadline. We have had three formal negotiations and several informal discussions with the Vietnamese. The policy has not changed. We are seeking as a goal of our policy normalization of relations with the Vietnamese. But these other factors have come along, and we are giving them serious consideration when we consider the pace and timing of normalization. But I can't go any further than that.

Q Mr. Cannon, in your assessment, is there any serious threat to the present Cambodian regime by the creation of this front in Viet-Nam?

MR. CANNON: I am not going to comment on that. I think Assistant Secretary Holbrooke has said that we certainly hope a few years from now that there will be a Cambodian government. That is a factor in our considerations.

That in no way changes our characterization, or the President's characterization, of Cambodia as the chief serious violator of human rights in the world today. But that in no way --

Q Jack, some of us who have been watching Viet-Nam now for about the last fifteen or twenty years have a memory of statements of no policy changes. Can't you at least concede that your policy toward recognition has changed? As I recall, at the start of this Administration the United States was ready for diplomatic relations with Viet-Nam so long as there were no preconditions.

Mr. Holbrooke is quoted and the Secretary has said that Viet-Nam has apparently dropped its precondition on economic aid.

If they had done that back in 1977, there would have been immediate diplomatic relations. So hasn't the policy now changed?

MR. CANNON: Well, Bernie, I am not going to get into a semantical discussion of when the policy can be considered to have changed.

All I am telling you are what the facts are, and that is that we are taking several serious factors into consideration. We have set up no preconditions whatsoever; however, there is no deadline; there is no timetable. We expect to be discussing normalization with the Vietnamese again -- both sides have said they expect to do so -- and as far as we are concerned, the policy remains unchanged.

Q Jack, did Hanoi ever react to that denunciation by Hank Cushing a couple of weeks ago about having to buy your way out of Viet-Nam?

MR. CANNON: Not that I am aware. No, I don't believe so.

Q Jack, you didn't answer my question about whether there is any relationship between the pace of normalization with Viet-Nam and relations between the United States and China.

MR. CANNON: I am not going to get into any discussion of linkage of our policy between China, Viet-Nam, Cambodia, the Soviet Union.

Q Is there linkage? The way you just answered, you leave it open whether there is any --

MR. CANNON: I have said I am just not going to get into a discussion of linkage concerning various policies. Our policy with respect to Viet-Nam stands on its own merits; and that is, we have stated it clearly: we are prepared to establish diplomatic relations with Viet-Nam without preconditions. That should be ipso facto apparent that it stands on its own merits.

Q Jack, you said here that we were concerned over serious conflicts between Cambodia and Viet-Nam. Will you mind illustrating a little bit more how serious it is -- the U.S. assessment of the seriousness of the conflict?

MR. CANNON: Well, Hodding has already said that our information from the area, Juan, is very sketchy. We simply don't know. But the reports suggest a serious and growing conflict. We do not know the dimensions of it, but we are seriously concerned enough about it to take it into account with respect to our whole Viet-Nam policy.

Q Thank you.

MR. CANNON: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 12:54 p.m.)